



Creating Policy, Systems, Environmental Change: Success Story and Lessons Learned

Title

Safe Routes to School Initiative presents Walk & Roll to School Events!

Intervention Summary

In an effort to address the growing rates of childhood obesity and safety concerns in the county, the San Joaquin County (SJC) Nutrition Education Obesity Prevention (NEOP) Program selected Safe Routes to School (SRTS) as one of the PSE strategies for FFY15. SJC NEOP staff worked with the Department's epidemiologists to identify high needs schools based on SNAP-Ed eligibility and bicycle and pedestrian collision data. Using this information, SJC NEOP partnered with five elementary schools (i.e., Rio Calaveras, King, Wilson, Fremont and Spanos) to provide technical assistance and support in preparation for National Bike to School Month in May. SJC NEOP staff trained and assisted school staff and community volunteers to conduct walkability assessments and create route maps. Their findings were used to support the coordination of Walk & Roll to School Events in each participating school for National Bike to School Month. SJC NEOP staff worked with school staff, parents, and student council groups in the planning and promotion of Walk & Roll to School events. SJC NEOP also partnered with Local Implementing Agency (LIA) UC Cooperative Extension to provide nutrition education and promote the importance of a healthy breakfast in conjunction with the Walk & Roll to School events. Through this partnership, SJC NEOP staff walked & rolled with more than 200 students to school in time for a healthy school breakfast. In addition, SJC NEOP staff partnered with other agencies and organizations working on local SRTS programs and initiatives. Staff promoted the work of Safe Moves Stockton, which is providing 16 local schools with SRTS training, classroom education and events (e.g., bicycle rodeos). SJC NEOP staff also partnered with the California Department of Public Health's Prevention First SRTS Coordinator and SJC Public Health Services SRTS Policy Project, funded through Kaiser Permanente. Both of these programs focus on developing school policy recommendations. SJC NEOP staff provided SRTS walkability training to the SRTS Policy Project staff, as well as referred

interested schools to these programs so they may receive guidance and support in the development of school policy recommendations.

Description of Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions

Event planning and coordination proved to be a challenge in some school locations. SJC NEOP staff partnered with parent groups along with school staff at King Elementary and Fremont Elementary Schools. Staff and parent participation was key to the promotion and implementation of SRTS events. Both events were successful, with minimal to no problems. However, the events at Rio Calaveras Elementary and Wilson Elementary Schools used student council groups to plan their SRTS events and participate in the walkability assessment trainings. SJC NEOP staff encountered scheduling problems and low attendance at planning meetings/trainings because students volunteered their time and activities usually took place during the lunch break. Rio Calaveras Elementary School had a slow start with less enthusiasm from students, but the actual Walk & Roll to School event was successful, complete with parent and school staff participation. Unfortunately, the event at Wilson Elementary School had low attendance with participation mostly from students who helped plan the event and no staff or parent involvement. For future planning it will be essential to have a core group of adults that is involved with the planning process and to stress to school principals the importance of having school staff participation on the day of the event. Even though none of the staff participated at the event and student turnout was low, SJC NEOP was fortunate to have a school board member participate at the Wilson Elementary Walk & Roll to School event. As a result, this board member has been actively involved in making sure that school staff is reaching out to SJC NEOP for SRTS program support and activities for their parents and students.

Future Directions/Sustainable Success

SJC NEOP's short term goals are to continue working with the five participating schools and reach out to new schools so they may consider participating in SRTS Walk to School and Bike to School events. This will be achieved by SJC NEOP staff assisting with facilitation of the existing SRTS Network. The Network includes school staff, community groups, local law enforcement, city planners, and other key stakeholders. SJC NEOP staff will continue to provide technical assistance to support SRTS event coordination. Technical assistance may include providing schools with guidance on starting Walking School Buses or Crossing Guard Programs to assist students who choose to walk or bicycle to school.

SJC NEOP's long term goals are to foster community champions at participating schools and to assist schools with the inclusion of SRTS programs and recommendations into their school wellness policies or handbooks. By cultivating community champions, each school will have the capacity to maintain SRTS activities, such as regular Walk to School and Bike to School events. These activities will help support the continued promotion of active and safe transportation (i.e., walking or bicycling to school). The SRTS Network will serve as a backbone to support these

champions. SJC NEOP staff will build relationships with SRTS experts and local city planners to assist with the development and review of SRTS program and policy recommendations. The SRTS Network will also serve as a conduit for news, information, and key resources related to SRTS program development or policy development, such as the California Safe Routes to School Technical Assistance Resource Center and Change Lab Solutions, as well as keeping schools apprised of potential funding opportunities through Caltrans.

Contact information about this Narrative

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